

Environment & Energy Commission
Minutes of the June 4, 2013 Meeting
Village Hall, Room 130

PRESENT: Commissioners: Laura Haussmann, Mac Robinet, Bob Peterson, Carolyn Cullen, Nick Bridge, Peter Hugh and Hanna Kwiecinska

ABSENT: Brian Chang and Caitlin Jeffries

STAFF: K. C. Poulos

The May 7 minutes were approved.

Chairperson Report: Laura attended the 2nd environmental sustainability forum for Envision Oak Park. The 3rd forum will discuss goals and objectives, and it is anticipated that a 4th forum will be scheduled as well.

Staff Reports: Staff reports were accepted without comment.

Public Comment: Peggy McGrath, resident, submitted comments regarding the use of pesticides in Oak Park, and research materials on the dangers of pesticides to humans, especially children as acknowledged by the American Pediatrician Association. Peggy mentioned a local blog – Deep Roots Oak Park – that helps raise awareness about the dangers of pesticide use. Peggy is requesting the EEC to explore the idea of purchasing, or the Village purchasing, yard signs for residents with chemical free lawns to post on their yards (she had a sample with her and a local contact for ordering more). Peggy has talked with the Health Department too. She would like to see pesticide ordinances incorporated into the Envision Oak Park process, and asked EEC to review state laws regarding notice to neighbors when a homeowner uses pesticides on their lawns.

Guest Speaker – Anti-Idling Ordinance

Jack Chalabain, Transportation Commission Chair, stated that the commissioners have expressed an interest in collaborating with EEC to recommend an anti-idling ordinance to the Board of Trustees. He asked for clarity regarding certain terms of the draft ordinance created in 2010, and pointed out a need to raise public awareness about turning engines off. EEC commissioners agreed, noting that the draft ordinance spoke only to diesel engines, and that the Idling Gets You Nowhere, although successful in 2010, needs to be reintroduced and expanded before an ordinance is enforced. EEC asked staff to update anti-idling research and add the item to July's agenda.

Discussion Items

A. Promote Water Conservation

Laura reported that all tabling events in spring 2013 went really well and all leak detection tablets were distributed. Moving forward, Laura asked if further tabling events

were of interest. Peter suggested the Scoville Park Sunday concerts, and pointed out the need for materials that speak to a resident's bottom line especially given water rate increases. Bridges stated that leakage is a big issue and asked if a plumbers' symposium would be worthwhile. Laura wondered, given the increase in single family residential water consumption reported in PlanItGreen's scorecard, whether EEC should switch tactics and support new legislation for greywater systems; however, it was pointed out that a legislative committee is already revising the Illinois Plumbing Code to include these systems. The EEC asked Karen for an update on this matter.

B. Lawn to Lake

Carolyn provided background on the Midwest chapter of Lake to Lawn and its resident pledge campaign, workshops for legislators, teachers, etc., and recommended promoting Lake to Lawn at next year's tabling events, as per the Oak Park Water Conservation Plan. Laura stated that she will bring this up with Karen on Friday and follow-up with Carolyn.

C. Research Pesticide Avoidance and Native Planting

Much of this item was discussed during Public Comment, but Carolyn also reported that a chapter of Wild Ones, a volunteer group that promotes and teaches native landscaping techniques to residents, is forming in Oak Park.

D. Review PlanItGreen Scorecard

EEC asked staff to report to Seven Generations Ahead its comments which included statements that it was a little soft, but the format helps highlight the areas that did not score well so that they can be prioritized in following years. Laura believes the EEC can play a role in the following items: complete streets (K.C. pointed out that Envision Oak Park is the best place to advocate for this concept); reducing residential water use; incorporating compost collection into the regular waste service; promoting local shopping; and, reducing residential use of toxins. Bridges suggested a pilot program for urban agriculture. EEC asked for an update on the zero waste block party idea.

E. Review Water Conservation Plan

Mac noted the connection between energy use and water consumption, and asked staff to describe the new technology being explored to reduce the energy use. Laura asked if the plan's purpose was to maintain compliance with regulations or provide an example of how a municipality can take conservation further. K.C. affirmed the latter and confirmed that the next step is to submit an implementation plan for EEC review and comment.

F. White Roof Brochure

EEC asked for an update from Buildings and Property Standards and legal staff regarding whether Oak Park could require white roofs given that it is in Zone 5 not Zones 1-3. The EEC agreed to allow Mac to use the brochure as a private citizen during lectures and other invitations to speak about energy efficiency.

G. HPC Guidelines

Hanna reported that she has not attended any additional HPC meetings. Commissioners weighed in on window guidelines, noting the loaded argument against replacement windows, the confusing diagram and the lack of value the best practices section provides

given that the guidelines are requirements. It was further noted that historic windows are important enough without denigrating a modern technology (double- or triple-paned window) that also has value. The EEC voted on the matter which resulted in a tie.

Adjourn: 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
K. C. Poulos